

# Bribie Beacon

## NOVEMBER 2023

**St Peter's Anglican Church  
Banya Street Bribie Island**

**Anglican**  
Church  
St Peter's Bribie Island

### **COMMISSIONING OF FR STEVEN**

*You are invited to the commissioning  
of Fr Steven as the next Rector of  
St Clement's Stafford on  
Sunday 26 November at 5pm.*

### **WEEKLY SERVICES**

Sunday - 7.30am & 9.30am  
Wednesday - 10am

### **PARISH CONTACT DETAILS**

#### **CHURCHWARDENS**

Margaret Peterson 5497 6978  
[jeff.marg.peterson@bigpond.com](mailto:jeff.marg.peterson@bigpond.com)  
Greg Rollason 3408 1998  
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Di Thatcher 0409 846 471  
[di@thatcher.com.au](mailto:di@thatcher.com.au)

#### **PARISH OFFICE**

(Wed & Fri - 9am to 12pm)  
3408 3191  
[bribieisland@anglicanchurchsq.org.au](mailto:bribieisland@anglicanchurchsq.org.au)

#### **WEBSITE**

[www.stpetersbribie.org.au](http://www.stpetersbribie.org.au)

#### **ONLINE GIVING BY CREDIT CARD OR DEBIT CARD**

<https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/TIM/?BillCode=1730050>

#### **ONLINE GIVING BY DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Ac Name - Bribie Island Parish  
BSB - 704-901  
Account Number - 00000040

#### **POSTAL ADDRESS**

PO Box 1087 Bongaree 4507

#### **LOCATION**

10-12 Banya Street Bongaree



The Right Reverend Cameron Venables  
Bishop Administrator and Bishop for the Western Region  
and

The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt  
and Cathedral Chapter

#### **Invite You**

to the

#### **Installation of**

**The Right Reverend Jeremy Greaves**

as

**Archbishop of Brisbane**

and

**Metropolitan of the Province of Queensland**

at

St John's Cathedral  
373 Ann Street, Brisbane

on

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023

at

10:30 am

## **PARISH NOTICES**

**Neighbourhood Centre** – Thank you to all who gave food to be delivered to B.I.D.N.C. for October.

**Clergy Relief** – While Fr Steven is on leave the Sunday services will be taken by Fr Doug Frith, Fr James Oulds and Bishop Bill Ray. The Wednesday services will be taken by Fr James Oulds. All other matters should be directed to the Churchwardens. For pastoral emergencies please contact a Churchwarden and they will seek a minister to assist.

**Appointment of a New Priest for St Peter's** - At the AGM each year the Parish elects 3 nominators to work with the Diocesan Presentation Board to seek the appointment of a Parish Priest. Our Parish Nominators are Di Thatcher, Margaret Peterson, Greg Rollason. All Parishioners are invited to submit names of clergy they feel would be suitable to be our next Parish Priest. Please support your Parish Nominators by assuring them of your prayers and by not asking them for updates. The process will take as long as it takes, and it is critical that all deliberations of the Presentation Board remain completely confidential.

**Commissioning of Fr Steven** – You are invited to attend the commissioning of Fr Steven as the next Rector of Stafford Parish on Sunday 26 November at 5pm at St Clement's on the Hill in Stafford.

**Installation of New Archbishop** - Archbishop-elect Jeremy Greaves will be installed as Archbishop of Brisbane at St John's Cathedral on Saturday 16th December 2023 at 10.30am.

**Empty Christmas Tree** - Once again we will be collecting gifts for the Empty Christmas Tree and will begin on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November. The idea is to purchase a gift to be given to a child in foster care in our area. This year Anglicare for Children & Families Caboolture has asked if we could concentrate on gifts for children aged from 8 years up to 17 years as a Young Mother's Group is focusing on infants and toddlers. Gifts may be wrapped with the appropriate age on a tag. Please, no pre-loved toys as this may be the only gift the child receives. A box will be left in the Narthex for the collection. Anglicare for Children & Families Caboolture are very grateful for our ongoing support.

**Archbishop's November Appeal** - The appeal this year is for the Solomon Islands Climate Change and Disaster Management Project. Aid is used to build local community strengths to prepare for disasters, increase their food security and address the adverse impacts of climate change. To support the Archbishop's ABM November Appeal please place your donation in an envelope marked "NOV APPEAL" and place in the collection box or you can give by direct deposit to the church account using the reference "NOV APPEAL".

**Common Communion Cup** - Anyone who has concerns or medical conditions with the common communion cup are encouraged to maintain the practice of communion in one kind (the bread only). For those taking communion in one kind be assured that Christ is fully present, and nothing is lacking taking communion in one kind only. The practice of intinction (dipping the bread in the cup) is not allowed. Communicants are welcome to either stand or kneel while at the altar rail.

## PARISH PRAYER POINTS

**Those celebrating Birthdays** - November Birthdays – Vicki Crofton (1<sup>st</sup>), Aileen Johnson (3<sup>rd</sup>), Pat Burgess (7<sup>th</sup>), Jon White (8<sup>th</sup>), Sylvia Baker (13<sup>th</sup>), Joan Fisher (13<sup>th</sup>), Tim Duffton (15<sup>th</sup>), Helen Lower (15<sup>th</sup>), Roz Thomson (16<sup>th</sup>), June Sturges (17<sup>th</sup>), John Shearer (27<sup>th</sup>).

**Special Birthdays** – Congratulations to Roz Thomson who celebrates her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November and Joh Shearer who celebrates his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November).

**Those in Need** – Anne Dowd, Vivienne Bourne, Linda Peterson.

**Continuing Prayer List** - Elva Woods, Kaye Bush, Phillipa Booth, Krista-Liisa Pulkkinen, Nicholas, Blake & Elizabeth Kubler.

**Prayer for a New Parish Priest** - Bountiful God, give to this parish a faithful pastor who will faithfully speak your word and minister your sacraments; an encourager who will equip your people for ministry and enable us to fulfil our calling. Give to those who will choose, wisdom, discernment and patience, and to us give warm and generous hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**Prayer for our New Archbishop-Elect** - Loving God, bless Jeremy, now called to be Archbishop of Brisbane; fill him with your truth, and clothe him with holiness, that he may preach your word, and care for your people; Give him compassion and wisdom, sustain him with your Spirit and inspire him with vision. We ask in the name of the one who calls, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer for Anglicare Australia** - God of Life-Giving Creation, You call us to act justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with you. We pray for the member organisations of Anglicare Australia working across this vast and ancient land. Enable us as we strive to meet human need through loving service and to build communities of resilience, hope and justice. Encourage us to work in mutual partnership to effect positive change. Empower the people we serve to reach their full potential, especially those who experience disadvantage and injustice. Guide us in our advocacy for social justice and strengthen our determination to respond with compassion. Remind us to care for ourselves and each other as we face the challenges of our work, and as we seek reconciliation, healing and community transformation. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our servant leader and friend. Amen.

**School Chaplaincy** - Julie Godfrey (Bribie High School) and Sean Godfrey (Bribie Island State School).



Our AMUA Branch provides for the use of members of the Parish “Care Bags” and “Prayer Shawls”. These are available in the narthex for all parishioners to take and offer to people they know who may be in need of support and care.



## **SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 31**

**Readings** - Joshua 3:7-17; Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; 1 Thessalonians 3:5-13 or 4.1-8; Matthew 23:1-12, (37–39)

**Sentence** - The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. Matthew 23.11-12

**Prayer of the day** - Creator God, you have filled the world with beauty: open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works, that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness, for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Scripture Reflection** - Most of us do not expect to hear Jesus say this: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it!” (Matthew 23:2-3) Can that be right? It’s tempting for many to skip over this part of Jesus’ teaching. The criticism of the scribes and Pharisees that follows is more familiar and comfortable: “but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.” However, we will misunderstand Matthew’s Gospel if we ignore the first part of the instructions: the scribes and Pharisees teach others to follow God’s law, and they are right to do so! Modern interpreters of Matthew somehow manage to convince ourselves that Jesus opposed the law. In doing so, we are conditioned by many centuries of Protestant interpretation and by our own experiences of Judaism as a religion that is wholly separate from Christianity. Yet from the very beginning Matthew has been clear to point in the other direction. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:18-19). He goes on to teach what it means to keep God’s commandments, like “you shall not murder” (Matthew 5:21) and “you shall not commit adultery” (Matthew 5:27). Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is critical of the Pharisees. However, he is not critical because they keep the law. For example, in one case, Jesus criticises the Pharisees for preferring their traditions over God’s command to honour father and mother (Matthew 15:3-5). Similarly, in this passage Jesus is critical of the Pharisees’ actions, but only because they do not practice what they teach. The Pharisees’ teachings are not a problem. But in their practice, the observance of the law becomes a burden that falls on the shoulders of others while the Pharisees reap public acclaim. Matthew characterises Jesus as an excellent teacher because he interprets the law with an eye to God’s larger vision for and love for humanity. The Pharisees serve as a literary foil, against which Jesus’ interpretation of the law stands out. Jesus teaches others to keep the law in a way that also meets the demands of God’s justice and God’s mercy. Jesus’ actions are consistent with his teachings. Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, readers have seen Jesus practicing the law in light of God’s justice and mercy. He keeps the Sabbath while bringing God’s wholeness to people (Matthew 12:9-14). He honours the Sabbath and feeds the hungry (Matthew 12:1-8). He cures the leper and sends him to the priest (Matthew 8:1-4). Jesus’ message is like the prophets who went before him. We like to credit Jesus for offering a new teaching, but the message he speaks here runs deep throughout Judaism. One example is Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” which Jesus quotes twice in Matthew’s gospel. One of these references is Jesus’ response to criticism that he eats with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus answers, “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:13). Later, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 when he is criticised because his disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:7). His responses do not mean that tax collecting and sinning are good. Nor does he argue that keeping the Sabbath is bad. However, Jesus suggests that keeping the law without exercising mercy does not fulfill God’s expectations.

**Question for Reflection** - In what ways does your congregation (or the church today in general) lay heavy burdens on people? (Matt 23:4)

## **SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 32**

Readings - Joshua 24.1-3a; 14-25; Psalm 78.1-7; 1 Thessalonians 4.9-18; Matthew 25.1-13.

Sentence - Watch and be ready, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24.42,44)

Prayer of the day - Eternal God, you have taught us that the night is far spent and the day is at hand: keep us awake and alert, watching for your kingdom, so that when Christ, the bridegroom, comes we may go out joyfully to meet him, and with him enter into the marriage feast that you have prepared for all who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - The expectation of Christ's return is central to Christian living. Although many Christians today consign talk of the Last Day to the realm of eccentric individuals with cult-like followings, the message of this passage suggests otherwise. The lives of Jesus' disciples are to be shaped by knowledge of his return. Like the other Gospels, Matthew is clear that the timing of Christ's return is unknown. Although Jesus speaks of signs of the end time (Matthew 24:3-35), he goes on to say that no one but God knows the day or hour of its arrival (Matthew 24:36). In this sense, the Gospel's view differs strongly from that of modern sages who claim to predict Christ's second coming. Matthew states clearly, "you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" (Matthew 24:44). The unknown timing of the Son's return makes readiness essential. The Gospel for this Sunday contains the parable of the ten bridesmaids that is sandwiched between two passages that emphasize preparation for the master's return. The prior passage, Matthew 24:45-51, contrasts the "faithful and wise slave" who is at work when his master comes (Matthew 24:45-46) with the self-indulgent slave who mistreats others and is surprised by the master's return (Matthew 24:48-50). The passage that follows this one, Matthew 25:14-30, is a parable in which the master entrusts his property to his slaves and expects their diligent investment of it. Both parables emphasise the actions of the slaves in the absence of the master. Their faithfulness is known through what they do when he is away. The bridesmaids parable also points to the importance of readiness. Its last verse, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour," points readers toward a message of watchfulness. It suggests that the foolish bridesmaids were not sufficiently prepared. However, the point of the parable is not constant readiness. "Keep awake" does not imply that the disciples should never sleep, standing vigil through the ages for Christ's imminent return. In fact, all of the bridesmaids, wise and foolish, are asleep when the shout announces the groom's approach. What is distinctive about this parable is its focus on the delayed return of the expected one. The passage does not simply call for right action in the groom's absence. It calls for recognition that he may be delayed. In this parable alone, the wise or prudent disciple is the one who prepares not only for the groom's return, but also for his delay. If the groom was coming quickly there would be nothing wrong with taking one's lamp full of oil to meet him. But the wise disciple packs a supply of oil, knowing that her wait may be unpredictable. It is difficult for many of today's disciples to be anything like the bridesmaids, wise or foolish, because we have stopped waiting. We give little thought to Christ's return, let alone what we should do to prepare for it. If we were to contemplate ourselves in relation to the end time, it might be easier to imagine ourselves as the slaves who work diligently while the master is away than as the bridesmaids whose primary job is to await the groom's return. This is not necessarily something for which modern Christians should be chastised, after the passage of two millennia, we have grown accustomed to the master's absence. It's a long time to wait expectantly. Nevertheless, there may be something we can gain from the parable's perspective. The parable asks us to imagine ourselves as those who wait for the groom's return. When the groom comes, the wedding feast may begin! The age-old promise of the marriage between God and Israel (for example in Hosea 2:16) will come to pass. Speaking as one who has already realised the promises, the prophet Isaiah writes, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness



and praise to spring up before all the nations” (Isaiah 61:10-11). The prophet sees a restored Israel, where human unfaithfulness has faded away, and is replaced by righteousness and praise. This is the wedding the bridesmaids await. Another voice proclaims the promise this way: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4). The bridesmaids await not only the groom but the removal of pain and suffering. The wedding feast initiates the reign of God’s justice and mercy, the realisation of all the hopes of Israel. To act as wise bridesmaids is to affirm our faith in the coming Christ. Doing so shows our trust that God is a God of justice and mercy. The eschaton encapsulates the ideals of God’s reign. It is the vision against which we judge our efforts in the meantime to live according to God’s principles. It is a vision of God’s ultimate justice and righteousness without which our world appears very bleak. The wise bridesmaids keep the vision of Christ’s return, and all that it stands for, alive through their faithful waiting in the midst of delay. By preparing for the day, the timing of which no one knows but God, they proclaim that God’s promises are true. They act out their hope for that day when God will establish justice and righteousness and peace.

### Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways do you think you (and your church community) serve Lord in sincerity and faithfulness? (Joshua 24:14)
2. What do you think it looks like in practice to set our hope in God and to teach others to do it? (Psalm 78:7)
3. What do you think keeping awake means in everyday life today, and when and where do you do it? (Matthew 25:13)

## **SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 33**

Readings - Judges 4.1-10; Psalm 123; 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11; Matthew 25.14-30.

Sentence - God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other. (1 Thessalonians 5.9,11)

Prayer of the day - Everliving God, before the earth was formed, and even after it shall cease to be, you are God. Break into our short span of life and show us those things that are eternal, that we may serve your purpose in all we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - Contrary to what might be shown by some best-selling televangelists, the parable does not justify a gospel of economic prosperity. Instead, it challenges believers to emulate their Master by using all that God has given them for the sake of the kingdom. Here Jesus instructs his disciples to endure through difficult times and to live in anticipation of the Lord's return. Like all the parables in this section, it illustrates the certainty of the Lord's coming and how the disciples are to live in the meantime. The teaching of the talents recalls the parable of the faithful and wise slave who continues to do the work of the master until the master comes (24:45-51). Although the master is delayed, he arrives to find the wise slave doing the tasks that have been appointed to him in the master's absence. The foolish slave, however, has neglected his work and abused his power. He receives severe punishment. Likewise, in the parable of the talents, the master entrusts his servants with his property, and punishment awaits those who have failed to carry on the master's work (24:49-51). Like the parable of the ten maidens before it, the parable of the talents portrays the kingdom of God (25:14). The kingdom is not simply likened to a man on a journey, but to the story that follows, a story that illustrates how the disciples are to wait until the Lord comes. In this story a wealthy man prepares for a journey by entrusting his estate to his servants. In the Lukan version of this parable (Luke 19:12-27), ten slaves receive one pound a piece to do the master's business. In the Matthean version, however, there are only three servants, and they receive shares according to their ability (25:15). Although the first receives five times as much as the last, each receives a significant sum of money.

A talent is equal to about 6,000 denarii. Since one denarius is a common labourer's daily wage, a talent would be roughly equivalent to 20 years wages for the average worker. Five talents, the largest amount entrusted to any of the servants, is comparable to one hundred years worth of labour, an astronomical amount of money. Like the preceding two parables, the return of the master is certain, but the timing is unknown. After a long absence, he discovers what each servant has done with his property. The first two slaves do business with the master's talents and double his money. Although the first slave earned more than the second, each has done remarkably well with what he has been given. They have performed according to their potential, and they have been faithful to do what the master has required of them. The master's response to each is the same. He commends the slaves for being good and faithful, entrusts them with more authority, and invites them to enter his "joy." The third servant is not so fortunate. In the response of this slave, however, the audience learns even more about the master. He is a man who reaps where he does not sow and gathers where he has not scattered seed. He aggressively seeks to expand his estate and takes whatever he can wherever he can to make a profit. He even reprimands the servant for failing to invest the money with the bankers so that he might have gained interest, a practice forbidden in scripture (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-38). The master's willingness to earn money at the expense of others challenges any allegorical interpretation of the parable that would directly correlate him with Jesus, who never acts in a manner to seek personal gain. That a wealthy landowner would behave in this manner, however, makes the story all the more compelling. The third slave admits that he was afraid to lose the master's money. To protect himself, he buried the talent in the ground. Although this may seem odd to audiences today, burying treasure was quite common at this time (13:44). The master is furious. He had entrusted this servant with a portion of his property in order that the slave would use his abilities, abilities that had helped the master in the past, in order to turn a profit for his lord. This slave, however, was too afraid to take a risk, even though risky behaviour was part of the master's business. Instead, he attempted to secure his own well-being. In the end his unfaithfulness to carry on the master's work cost him severely (25:30). The master expected the servants to continue his business, to take risks to make a profit, and to emulate his behaviour. Two servants were found faithful, and they are rewarded. Their faithfulness had increased the master's wealth and expanded his estate. In its literary setting, Jesus tells this story to his disciples (24:3) to prepare them for the days ahead when their faith will be tested. This parable depicts how the disciples are to demonstrate their faithfulness as they anticipate the return of the Lord. What does faithfulness look like in a time of waiting? In Matthew's Gospel faithfulness is emulating the ministry of Jesus. Jesus has announced the arrival of God's kingdom by feeding the hungry, curing the sick, blessing the meek, and serving the least. All who would follow Jesus are to preach the good news of the kingdom to the whole world (24:14) by going about the work that the master has called them to do (24:24-51). This work includes visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and feeding the hungry (25:31-46). Those who are found faithful may hear their Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

#### Questions for Reflection

1. In your congregation and daily life, what does it mean for your eyes to look to the Lord our God? (Psalm 123:2)
2. What do you think the day of the Lord will be like, and how much should we think about it? (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
3. Which kind of slave are you, and which kind of slave is most common in your congregation? (Matthew 25:14-30)

*"For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;  
I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me;  
I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."*

## **SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2023 - CHRIST THE KING**

Readings - Ezekiel 34.11-16,20-24; Psalm 100; Ephesians 1.15-23; Matthew 25.31-46

Sentence - O shout to the Lord in triumph all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness and come before his face with songs of joy. (Psalm 100.1)

Prayer of the day - God of power and love, who raised your Son Jesus from death to life, resplendent in glory to rule over all creation: free the world to rejoice in his peace, to glory in his justice, and to live in his love. Unite the human race in Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - We come this Sunday, in Matthew's Gospel, to the final discourse of Jesus before his passion. The theme of judgment in Matthew's Gospel plays a central role. We encounter it already at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3. Throughout the Gospel, we are continually made aware of a tension between obedience and disobedience. Like the person who came to Jesus and asked "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16-24), so we too wonder on what side we will find ourselves, the right or the left? The question, however, is simply an excuse for doing nothing. The person attempts to engage Jesus in an endless ethical discussion about works or good deeds. In this passage, the question resurfaces but in an importantly different way: "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" (25:44). Those at the left hand of the Son of Man seek an excuse and almost put the blame on the Son of Man himself as if to say, "You didn't reveal yourself; how could we see you?" The curious and also amazing aspect of their question is that it is repeated twice in the parable, once by those on the right and then by those on the left, and yet there is an enormous difference in meaning! When it is asked by those on the right, the question stems from what might be called a holy ignorance. These were people who had entered the joy of their master without even knowing it. Such participation is not self-evident. The joy they knew was not complete; it was mixed with suffering, danger, risk, tribulations, and most likely many disappointments. And yet, it was joy. They acted out of mercy. They went the way of the cross and now find themselves at the right hand of the Son of Man. On the contrary, those on the left did not know mercy or joy and we might add they did not know simplicity either. They complicated every situation allowing their own judgment as to whom they had to serve deafen them to the cry of those who were calling out in need. They did not live in the spirit of the beatitudes. Judgment, as it appears in this passage, has more to do with mercy than it does with works. Has the community of believers been formed in a spirit of mercy? Those on the right hand of the Son of Man (also designated the "King") are those who have gone through the great tribulation, those who have lived out their baptism, not those who have conscientiously performed good works or have been morally upright. They are the ones who have risked dying and rising with Jesus in this world and are not waiting for some other future world or life. In this final discourse, we rediscover another theme that has been running throughout Matthew's Gospel, the theme of discipleship. At the heart of the Sermon on the Mount is this call to an obedience that is not prescription or law or sacrifice but joyful living in mercy without calculation. This joyful living takes believers to an unexpected place. It takes them to the cross; it takes them to the cross in human lives, to the cross in the life of family, community, society, nation, and world. It takes them to the place of God's suffering in the world. Much attention has been given in the history of interpretation to the identity of the lowliest "brothers." Are they part of the community of believers or are they outsiders? Do they belong or not? Yet, the parable itself doesn't seem to be concerned about their identity other than to identify their suffering (hungry, naked, imprisoned, etc.). The parable of judgment is far more focused on the life of mercy that has or has not been lived by those who call out "Lord, Lord!"

### Questions for Reflection

1. What would you say in a prayer for loved ones about the hope to which Jesus has called us? (Ephesians 1:18)
2. Which tasks listed here are easiest and hardest for you and for the people in our church community? (Matthew 25:35-36)